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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews initiatives the South Carolina Department of Education has undertaken in the area of school psychology, particularly as it pertains to evaluating and placing handicapped children. Two brief introductory sections cover the role, function, and certification of school psychologists and national approaches toward the delineation of standards for practice (including specific responsibilities of psychological services required under P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act). School psychology in South Carolina is reviewd in terms of present state requirements, approved training programs, and nondegree certification. Results of a South Carolina survey of teachers and administrators as well as a survey of school psychologists are summarized with such findings as a perceived need by teachers and administrators for more student counseling and a perceived need by psychologists to review current certification standards. Initial activities of a South Carolina task force which is examining standards for the role, function, and certification of school psychologists are described. (DB)

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Briefing Paper

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SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INITIATIVES IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

Educational opportunity for handicapped children has recently become a central issue in the national conscience as evidenced by the passage of Public Law 94-142. Consistent with the provisions of law and the wishes of a democratic society, the denial of opportunity for handicapped children is rapidly becoming a memory rather than an action. The public schools of South Carolina have been quite successful in finding and placing these children in school programs; however, it is recognized that "placement" is not necessarily synonymous with "appropriate" instruction.

In the quest to provide quality programs for handicapped children, state and local agencies have identified several areas where service delivery challenges are enormously complex. This briefing paper has been developed in the hope that the citizenry of South Carolina will become more knowledgeable in the problems confronting public education of the handicapped, as well as gain more insight into the directions that the South Carolina Department of Education is pursuing for their resolutions.

Robert S. Black, Director
Office of Programs for the Handicapped

Briefing Paper

INITIATIVES IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

The Role, Function and Certification of School Psychologists

School psychology has evolved primarily as a result of efforts within the American educational system to develop schools that recognize and support the principle that each learner must be known, understood, and regarded as central in the education process.

Expanded Services

Over the years, the role of school psychologists has changed and expanded. Earlier, the school psychologist's skills were focused exclusively on the testing of the exceptional child. Now, in addition to assessing the individual child, school psychologists are involved with the teacher, the classroom, the school system as a whole, and the total context in which children learn.

Variety of Places

The types of services that are provided by school psychologists are determined by the needs of the population (children) they serve. Across the nation, school psychologists are employed in individual school districts, private schools, government education facilities, private clinics and guidance centers, hospitals, state institutions, the court systems, colleges and universities, research centers, and almost anywhere else children require psychological services.

In the Schools

In the public schools, special education still serves as the basis for the functioning of many school psychologists; however, others seldom work only with special education students. Their activities include classroom consultation, curriculum development, in-service training, and program development with children and teachers in regular education programs.

Changes in Training and Certification

To be sure, the demand for additional services and the resultant growth of school psychology has had a definite impact on the training and certification of school psychologists. New graduate programs have been established throughout the country in which students are required to take course work and be exposed to experiences in psychology, general education, special education, administration, research, and other areas. Nationally, state certification standards are being revised and broadened to include the variety of experiences and training that will best prepare the school psychologist to work in today's schools.

National Approaches Toward the Delineation of Standards for Practice

National Standards

A number of organized efforts have been made in recent years to improve the scope and quality of psychological services for all school children. The two national professional organizations that represent school psychologists, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and the American Psychological Association (APA), have developed comprehensive standards for the training and the practice of school psychology. The NASP guidelines have been endorsed and adopted by NCATE (the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education). These standards specify a practitioner entry level (i.e., into the profession) of at least sixty (60) graduate semester hours of course work, including 1,000 clock hours of supervised experience. The American Psychological Association's guidelines require the doctoral degree for those who hold the title "school psychologist," while the master's level professional must function under supervision and cannot hold the title "psychologist."

Public Law 94-142

At the federal level, specialized instructional services for handicapped school children have been comprehensively addressed through Public Laws 93-112, 94-482, and 94-142; however, the provision of noninstructional services, e.g., school psychologist services, has received relatively little attention. Nevertheless, Public Law 94-142 does define psychological services as they relate specifically to the handicapped child as services that include:

(i) Administering psychological and educational tests, and other assessment procedures;

(ii) Interpreting assessment results;

(iii) Obtaining, integrating, and interpreting information about child behavior and conditions relating to learning;

(iv) Consulting with other staff members in planning school programs to meet the special needs of children as indicated by psychological tests, interviews, and behavioral evaluations; and

(v) Planning and managing a program of psychological services, including psychological counseling for children and parents. (Section 121a.13)

No Federal Standards

Public Law 94-142 did not attempt to formulate standards for the training and practice of school psychology. Instead, the law stipulates that psychological services must be performed by "qualified examiners," i.e., those who meet "State educational agency approved or recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements." Unfortunately, the basic qualifications for school psychological examiners are not uniformly defined throughout the nation. Some states simply do not have certification standards for psychological service providers; others have anywhere from one to five levels of certification with no consensual validation as to what constitutes minimal requirements.

Inconsistent State Definitions

Problems in Nomenclature

Obversely, the certification nomenclature is inconsistent. In some states the title "school psychologist" is reserved for the doctoral level (Ed.D., Psy.D., Ph.D.) practitioner; in others, masters and sixth-year level personnel are referred to as "school psychologists." And, finally, a variety of additional titles such as psychometrist, diagnostic evaluator, and educational evaluator complicate the situation by providing "specialty" psychological and educational services that are tantamount to autonomous practice.

State Standards Needed

Before these problems can be solved, each state must systematically address its service delivery needs. Psychological services must be thoroughly researched and studied to aid school districts in maintaining more efficient service delivery mechanisms and to improve the availability, quality, and cost effectiveness of school psychological services.

School Psychology in South Carolina

School psychology in South Carolina is very closely related to special education programs, for it was through special education that many school districts first employed school psychologists. In fact, some school psychologists are currently employed because of special education. On November 6, 1970, the South Carolina State Board of Education approved the following procedures relative to the evaluation and placement of special education students:

Present State Requirements

> For the purpose of fulfilling the requirements for the placement of an individual in programs of special education all evaluators must be approved by the State Department of Education or by school psychology training programs. There are four

levels of evaluators: (a) Educational Evaluator, (b) Psychologist I, (c) Psychologist II, and (d) Psychologist III. Educational Evaluators and Psychologists I shall not be permitted to evaluate students for special placement except under the supervision of a Psychologist II or a Psychologist III.

Approved Training Programs

Currently, there are two approved school psychology training programs in South Carolina, the University of South Carolina and Winthrop College. The University of South Carolina's school psychology training program emphasizes courses in development, statistics, personality, and learning theory. Additionally, supervised practicum experiences and internship experiences are provided. Areas of emphasis for the Winthrop College school psychology training program include supervised practice with competency-based methods courses, individual assessment, behavior modification, counseling, educational remediation, and supervised practicum and internship experiences.

Non-degree Certification

However, it is also possible to secure certification as a school psychologist in South Carolina without completing the requirements of an approved school psychology training program. This is possible by obtaining the necessary course requirements for certification and gaining a field-based internship with the supervision of a Level II or a Level III school psychologist. Although this practice has been discouraged by training programs and the South Carolina Department of Education, it appears to be an ever-increasing means of preparation for school psychologists in South Carolina.

Approaches to Defining Role, Function and Certification

Statewide Surveys

During the 1977-1978 school year, the South Carolina Department of Education, Office of Programs for the Handicapped, conducted a series of qualitative and quantitative surveys on school psychology. Questionnaires were directed to school psychologists, teachers, university training programs, and school administrators throughout the state.

Teacher-Administrator Input Sought

In an effort to gain insight into the current functioning of district school psychologists, a teacher-administrator questionnaire was developed to be disseminated by school psychologists to teachers and public school administrators in their respective districts. Teachers and administrators were asked for

their suggestions for improving the usefulness of school psychologists to them. Nine hundred sixty-seven (967) usable questionnaires were returned—12 percent of the respondents were public school administrators; 88 percent were classroom teachers.

The most frequent suggestions received were that there should be more school psychologists (34.4 percent); that the psychologist should spend more time consulting with teachers (17.2 percent); and, that the time between psychological evaluation and the written report should be decreased (13.7 percent). (See Table I.)

TABLE I

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE USEFULNESS OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

Needed	Percent
Improve the psychological report	3.448
Observe more in the classroom	1.724
Consult with teachers	17.241
Counsel students	3.448
Assist in the educational improvement of the entire school	3.448
Write educational prescriptions with teacher follow-up	1.724
Be consistent in criteria for placement	1.724
Provide follow-up	3.448
Conduct home visits	1.724
Spend more time in the schools	6.897
Reduce the psychologist/pupil ratio	34.483
Schedule visits so time is not wasted	3.448
Speed up the lapse between evaluation and written report	13.793
Talk to classes	1.724
Test more often	1.724
TOTAL	100.000

Student Counseling Needed

When the teachers and administrators were asked to indicate which services of a psychological nature are needed and are not currently being provided, the majority of respondents (21.4 percent) said that the counseling of students was needed and was not currently being provided. Nineteen percent, however, indicated that a greater emphasis should be placed on testing and recommendations. Nearly 12 percent suggested

that the evaluation and follow-up activities were the weakest areas. As evidenced from the inspection of Table II, almost 10 percent pointed to a need for more work with regular classroom teachers.

TABLE II

SERVICES WHICH WERE REPORTED TO BE NEEDED AND ARE NOT BEING PROVIDED

Needed	Percent
Services to all school children—not only the handicapped	2.381
Classroom observation	2.381
Consultation with administration	2.381
Consultation with teachers	2.381
Coordination of work with agencies	2.381
Student counseling	21.429
Crisis intervention	4.762
Provision of services for the educational development of the total school	2.381
Evaluation and follow-up	11.905
More work with regular teachers	9.524
Increased number of psychologists	4.762
Screening	2.381
Social work	2.381
Increased speed of services	4.762
Testing and recommendations	19.048
More thorough tests	4.761
TOTAL	100.000

School Psychologist Input Sought

Additionally, 234 practitioner questionnaires were disseminated by mail to practicing school psychologists and educational evaluators in South Carolina. The *Practitioner Questionnaire* contained forty-eight descriptions of specific tasks which might be performed by school psychologists; respondents were asked to rate these on a one-to-five scale according to the relative importance of that task to their own functions. Ninety-five (95) of the *Practitioner Questionnaires* were returned in usable form.

Assessment Ranks High

The items most frequently indicated as major components of the current function of psychologists included assessing individual intellectual functioning, writing comprehensive reports, participating in staffing committees, assessing perceptual motor skills, evaluating learning disabilities, evaluating the

individual personality, and reporting test findings to parents, teachers, and administrative staff. The services that were viewed as being the least important of those that are now provided by school psychologists included teaching at a nearby college or university, conducting play therapy sessions, writing a budget, participating on interdepartmental committees, going to PTA meetings, and coordinating research activities.

Testing and Paperwork Time Consuming

The four open-ended questions on the *Practitioner Questionnaire* drew fewer responses than the checklist items; however, over 51 percent of the respondents felt that testing was a function that they could do less often. Additionally, paperwork was a function with which over 30 percent of the respondents showed a desire to have less involvement. When asked what functions psychologists should perform more often, the highest percentage of school psychologists responding indicated that they would like to do more counseling with students.

Certification Questionnaire

A final questionnaire on certification was directed to coordinators of school psychological services, school psychologists, and educational evaluators in South Carolina public schools. Of the 234 questionnaires which were disseminated, sixty-seven (67) were completed and returned. More specifically, this questionnaire requested information relative to the need for changes in certification. Over 92 percent of the respondents suggested that there was a need to revise the current standards on certification. When asked to identify the minimum certification level for practicing school psychologists, 74 percent indicated the School Psychologist Level I should be the minimal entry level for the profession. These figures are shown in Tables III and IV.

Need to Revise

Autonomous Practice

School Psychologist Level II was chosen as the minimum certification level for autonomous practice (i.e., without supervision). Over 72 percent of the respondents were in favor of autonomous practice for the Psychologist Level II, while only 24 percent were in favor of the master's level (School Psychologist I) functioning independently of supervision. (Refer to Table V.)

Supervision

When asked to define supervision, no respondents agreed that supervision should be defined solely as a cosigning of psychological reports. The majority of respondents, 56.9 percent, indicated that supervision should be resident supervision by a Psychologist Level II who is a full-time employee of the school district. Only 3 percent of the respondents indicated that supervision should not be required. (See Table VI.)

TABLE III

RESPONDENT'S OPINION RELATIVE TO A NEED FOR CERTIFICATION CHANGES

Revisions	Frequency	Percent
Not needed	5	7.576
Needed	61	92.424
TOTAL	66	100.000

There was one missing value excluded from the above totals.

TABLE IV

ENTRY LEVEL FOR THE PRACTICE OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

Entry Level	Frequency	Percent
Educational Evaluator	14	22.581
School Psychologist I	46	74.194
School Psychologist II	2	3.226
TOTAL	62	100.000

There were five missing values excluded from the above totals.

TABLE V

MINIMUM CERTIFICATION FOR PRACTICE WITHOUT SUPERVISION

Minimum Certification	Frequency	Percent
School Psychologist I	16	24.615
School Psychologist II	47	72.308
School Psychologist III	2	3.077
TOTAL	65	100.000

There were two missing values excluded from the above totals.

TABLE VI

SUPERVISION DEFINITIONS

Supervision	Frequency	Percent
Itinerate Level II	9	13.846
Itinerate Level III	9	13.846
Resident Level II	37	56.923
Resident Level III	8	12.308
Should be only recommended, not required	2	3.077
TOTAL	65	100.000

There were two missing values excluded from the above totals.

Revision Needed

In conclusion, the University of South Carolina and the Winthrop College School Psychology Training Program, as well as the majority of school psychologists sampled, have expressed a need for revision in current certification standards. Additional areas of concern for both university trainers and practicing school psychologists were those of internship experiences and supervision. Presently, certification requirements for all four areas (i.e., educational evaluator, School Psychologist I, School Psychologist II, and School Psychologist III) specify a completion of an internship in a school-related setting or a school psychology training program. When the internship is secured in a "school-related setting" that is not affiliated with an approved training program, there is no established and consistent method of supervision. Typically, the intern is asked to do whatever the priority concern is for the district at that time. This could inherently limit the range of experiences of an intern.

Problems in Internship

In some cases, the field-based internship has led to an out-of-field "degree" which has resulted in concerns from both practitioners and school psychology training programs relative to the number of individuals who are able to secure certification as a "school psychologist" without ever completing an approved training program. In effect, the issue is that field-based internship experiences should not become a "port of entry" an out-of-field persons who wish to gain access to the profession.

Supervision Problems

The other major concern is that of supervision. Currently, educational evaluators and Psychologists I are not permitted to evaluate students for special placement, except under the supervision of a Psychologist II or a Psychologist III; however, specific details relative to what constitutes supervision have yet to be formulated. In the absence of guidelines for supervision, the cosigning of psychological reports has been the procedure of choice for evidence of supervision in most districts. However, when asked to define supervision, no practitioners concurred that supervision should be solely defined as the cosigning of psychological write-ups. The majority, 56.9 percent, indicated that supervision should be resident supervision only, by a Psychologist II or III who is a full-time employee of the school district. Only 3 percent suggested that supervision should not be required.

SEA Initiatives to Identify Problem Areas

Task Force Appointed

In March of 1979, the South Carolina Department of Education, Office of Programs for the Handicapped, assembled a sixteen (16) member task force to provide recommendations for standards for the role, function, and certification of school psychologists. In selecting task force members, an effort was made to utilize multidisciplinary expertise in all areas relevant to the goals of the task force. The task force members are as follows:

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Initial Meetings

The initial meetings of the task force were devoted to clarifying its charge. It was understood by the task force that the current standards for the certification of educational evaluators and school psychologists were last reviewed during the 1970-1971 school year. Although existing course requirements were somewhat outdated, they did make basic provisions for the procurement of foundation courses, methods and techniques courses, education courses, and internship experiences. However, difficulties were evident in existing standards in regard to certification and the establishment of definitive guidelines for internship experiences and supervision. Also, as mentioned earlier, national standards for the practice of school psychology encourage changes that require sixth-year entry levels for school psychologists in all states. Finally, the issue of role and function was identified as being related to that of entry level (i.e., when multilevel certification exists, it becomes necessary to detail the role of the various levels of practitioners).

A Conduit

The task force recognized the complexities involved in addressing each of these areas. However, the philosophy of the task force was that it should not view itself as the repository of knowledge about these problems, but rather as a conduit bringing together the perceptions and thoughts of others. Accordingly, much effort has gone to eliciting input and information from people in the field. It is anticipated that draft standards will be reviewed by professional organizations and district practitioners throughout the state.

Presently, three (3) task force subcommittees have crystallized:

1. Subcommittee on Administration, Finance and Essential Services
2. Subcommittee on Role and Function
3. Subcommittee on Training and Continuing Education

Finance and Manpower

It is anticipated that the first subcommittee will work in the areas of finance and manpower development. Likewise, the members of this subcommittee may choose to meet with professional organizations, such as the Superintendent's Association and school principals, to present proposals relative to changes in the certification of school psychologists. This subcommittee will be responsible for gathering data concerning the cost of school psychologists and the district's capabilities of employing school psychologists at the various levels of certification.

Role and Function

The second subcommittee will be responsible for developing listings of functions of school psychologists and coordinating these functions with course requirements for the certification of school psychologists. The outlining of entry level requirements will be a major responsibility. It is anticipated that this subcommittee will be responsible for receiving the input of the South Carolina Association of School Psychologists and the South Carolina Psychological Association in formulating the role and function of school psychological services.

Training

The third subcommittee will be responsible for addressing the issue of training capability. Its major task will be to discuss and develop proposals for the various alternatives that will be available for educational evaluators and school psychologists to upgrade their certification. This subcommittee may wish to develop proposals for all alternatives including: 1) grandfathering, 2) the use of an approved training program, 3) the enrollment of "special students" in approved training programs, and 4) the development of a statewide continuing education program. Additionally, in the event that multilevel certification is recommended, it would be the responsibility of this subcommittee to develop guidelines for supervision and internship experiences.

The task force plans to submit final recommendations by January 1, 1980.

The intent of this briefing paper has been to communicate to all interested parties the initiatives that the South Carolina Department of Education has undertaken in the area of school psychology. It is hoped that the material contained herein will be helpful to local school districts, Department of Education task force teams, professional organizations, parents, and university programs in clarifying the challenges that exist for state and local education agencies in providing quality education and related services for the school children in South Carolina.

For further information, please write or call:

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